I:M:Dorsey/B-5 (1922-1924)/948
NES Bellacoola NES

or ddish himself with the traditions of his new home. This is another illustration of the patrilineal tendency of the whole organization.

Politically, the village is the most important Bella Coola unit. Usually, though not always related to one another, the inhabitants are always friends. If an attack is made on a village by a hostile war-party, all the inhabitants suffer equally. On the other hand, if the residents decide to attack another settlement, there is no compulsion for anyone to share the burden. Each individual, with the exception of slaves, follows his own inclination. In the case of murder or other wrong inflicted by an individual, the responsibility rests on his immediate family, not the village. Factions within the village seem to have been unimportant; individual jealousies were common, and often led to murder, but if a family became unpopular or considered itself aggrieved, it usually moved to another village. Neighbouring settlements were generally on friendly terms and often assisted each other in war, but this was not compulsory. Indeed, cases are known in which a war-party from the outer coast, about to attack *Ilawd*, passed within a quarter of a mile of *Qwaqa'a* without its inhabitants even warning their threatened neighbours.

As far as internal organization is concerned, the village is as fluid a unit as are most Bella Coola groupings. If one individual has attained a position of eminence through the potlatch system (vol. I, chap. IV), he is "chief" of the village, and his advice is generally followed. If several men have approximately the same importance, there is no dominating figure. In any case, a chief lacks executive authority, and such obedience as he receives is due to his personal influence. Some slight deference is paid to the man who uses the name of the eldest of the first group of settlers, the first chief, but this is not sufficient to warrant the title of "chief" with the significance usually attached to the term. The important members of the village are accustomed to meet for the discussion of ceremonial mat-

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as far as incest rules are concerned. In this particular instance the woman did not show any interest in her new relatives, failed to visit them, or to take part in their ceremonies, so that the adoption, though still legal, has practically lapsed. When this man dies his children will not consider the claims of their father's "sister" to inherit any of his possessions, as they would have done if she had showed herself appreciative of her adoption.

It will thus be seen that the size and composition of the family vary according to the wealth and influence of the father. The duties of the members are difficult to define since they concern almost entirely the routine of life. The father, head of the family, directs the gathering of firewood, repair of the house, obtaining of food supplies, and other matters of the same sort. If he gives a potlatch his children must help him, which they do willingly since they gain from the ceremony. If a father is too autocratic, his older, especially his married children, simply move away. Nor is his power over his younger children unbounded, since their mother's relatives take great interest in their welfare and would resent any ill-treatment.

If a person is killed or wounded, revenge is the affair of his family. Just how many individuals are involved depends on the composition of the family. In the case of the killing of a child, living with his parents alone, none but the father would feel it incumbent to retaliate. If an adult person is murdered, his or her brothers feel and avenge the insult. But should an important member of the community be slain, an old man surrounded by a numerous family, it is the affair of all. Every effort is made to slay the murderer, but if he should escape from the country, the injured group is satisfied by killing one of his family. Here again the same inverse composition is found. A man's son, brother, or father are the only persons strictly liable, and even here the common sense of the Bella Coola outweighs their theoretical laws. A murderer's brother, living in another village, would not be held liable; but more distant relatives living with the offender and considered as his

family are liable

Ii McDonald K-1 (1922-1924) 1948
NEA Bellacoola NEA

family are liable. It is very rare for a woman to be killed in a blood feud. A death is answered by a death; if two persons should be slain for one murder the family which has suffered the double loss endeavours to kill another of their enemies. In case of wounding, an effort is made to wound the offender, but if he should be killed his family would try to avenge him. More often, one of the offender's family takes the initiative of offering goods to the injured family, "to cure the wound." If the offer is accepted, and the goods delivered properly, the matter is at an end. If a murder be committed within the ranks of the immediate family, for instance, if a brother kill a brother, revenge, if exacted, must be meted out to the actual offender. If requested to do so, the leading chief of a village may offer his advice, but it is always considered that revenge concerns only the immediate family.

Revenge is a topic which shows clearly the essential fluidity of the family. There are no well-defined degrees of relationship within which responsibility rests. Instead, everyone knows, in the open life of the community, how many persons share the family life of the individual, and they alone are held to account, or they alone demand compensation. From its very nature, the family must be a bilateral unit which, when powerful, stretches out to absorb members of the ancestral families of both mother and father.

Not only does the family thus appear constantly to be attracting to itself members of the ancestral family of either parent, but these relatives themselves are deeply interested in the affairs of the family. This is most clearly shown in the case of children who, of course, are members of the ancestral family of both their mother and father. A few days after birth some relative is expected to call together the people of the village where the child is born for the bestowal and validation of an ancestral name. It is considered an evidence of poverty if this is done by the father, as if his child were only supported by his parents, not by a larger circle of relatives. It is immaterial whether this gathering be called by a relative

I:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

all that he sits in an enviable spot, irrespective of its location in the house. 554 556*

In precisely the same manner a man may take for himself a seat in the central part of the row behind the fire, but he is laughed at for endeavouring to assume a dignity, unworthily, unless he can validate his position by lavish presents. The Bella Coola are always ready to make fun of a person who fails to maintain his seat. On the death of the occupant of the central position it is taken for granted that whoever inherits his name will assume that location and give the essential presents, but it is not incumbent upon him to do so. He may choose to establish his new name at his old station, beside, instead of behind, the fire. Thus it has come to pass that the seat of the most important chief of a village is often at the side of the house. When all are seated the chiefs may be widely separated, and a parent may have obtained for his son a seat in a better part of the house than his own. But as a rule the chiefs sit in a row at the back of the fire, the most influential one in the middle. There must have been feuds when two men desired to seat themselves in the central position at the same time, but disputes about this were uncommon, because a man's seat was, and still is, primarily regarded as the intangible goods wherewith he is clothed, rather than his right to sit at any particular spot. It is these non-material coverings that enable a man to be bold and assertive in argument or suggestion, in fact to be a chief. A young man may have had conferred on him one of the noblest names, but his influence depends on the value of the goods expended on his behalf, subject of course to the universal characteristic that a man of forceful character may have more influence than his actual position warrants. [424] [428] [622] [424]

Jealous feuds are common when the man who owns the name of the first chief, first ancestor of a village, has duly validated it, but is being eclipsed in the giving of potlatches by a man whose name is of less intrinsic importance. Such a complication recently arose at Kimsquit, and the Bella Coola [578] [682]

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

554 ascribe two murders which took place there in 1915 to jealousy
* 556 engendered by rivalry.

A chief who desires to have his son, or other near relative,
[578] succeed to his actual seat may validate for him a position at
• 682 his feet. If several potlatches be given, with distribution of
[622] goods for this purpose, it becomes recognized that the son shall take his father's seat. None the less, he will not have his father's influence or prestige unless he can himself continue to give away goods, because the power of a chief rests on this, not on his ancient name or the location of his seat.

553 Further evidence that a man's influence rests less on his
* 556 actual name than on the wealth distributed with reference to it is found in the lack of uniformity in the type of names validated. Those of highest potential importance are the ones brought to the earth by the first-comers, yet in many cases a man prefers to elevate his position with respect to a name of later origin. It is not uncommon for a man to validate several ancestral designations, and choose one of them to be his most important by valuable gifts for the seat which he occupies with respect to it; or in other cases a name of modern origin is selected and elevated. Thus, a certain Bella Coola chief who is the legal owner of the names *Q̇il* and *Xemlaix*, two of the first people to settle this earth, has based his greatness on the goods expended for a seat with reference to the name *Sầkvelâx*, of more modern origin. It is accordingly clear that any Bella Coola can rise to a position of importance, even though he lacks the right to one of the most ancient names. Moreover, some chiefs prefer to validate several names rather than concentrate on one alone.

[622] Furthermore, a powerful chief can create a name. In this case the "power" of the designation rests, not in any supernatural origin, but in the actual wealth distributed. Two examples will serve to illustrate this point. Between 1880 and 1890 a chief was preparing to give a potlatch at which his nephew was to receive a name, when fire destroyed the village with the exception of his house. This added to the value of

In McDowall E-5 (1922-1924) 1968
NEB Bellacoola NEB

622 there is such dread of the supernatural powers possessed by
623 members of the *Axsisr* society that none would dare go there.
778 If an uninitiated person should do so, he would formerly have
been either killed or initiated into the society. The meeting-
[575] place of the *Kemqo'ts* chiefs is on a ledge of rock jutting out
over a waterfall about a quarter of a mile from the village.
The stream winds down a narrow cleft of the mountain side,
screened by dense vegetation, and suddenly falls into a cauld-
ron, so hemmed in by cliffs that no sunlight can enter. The
ledge is immediately above the brink of the falls, one of the
most awe-inspiring places imaginable. The meeting-places of
other villages lack such natural settings, though all are at the
bases of cliffs, or near some easily distinguished feature. Some
178 of them are decorated with rude carvings, pecked into the
582 stone. The meaning of the designs is not known to any of
778 the present inhabitants. Some of them were made, long ago,
by chiefs when they were composing tunes; they picked out
the rock in time to the music forming in their minds. Others
[211] were mere memorials of certain events. If a chief gave an
important ceremony, he, or one of his friends, carved a figure,
perhaps that of a man, perhaps of some animal connected with
the rite, to recall the occasion. No carvings have been made
within the life-time of any Bella Coola, so it is probable that
they had further significance, now unknown.

622 When a chief wishes to summon his fellows for a meeting
623 he visits each and notifies him by a simple pressure of the foot,
201 in many cases unobserved even by those sitting near. The
person so called slips away, unostentatiously, to the meeting-
place.

578 The position of chief was not without disadvantages in the
622 old days. The Bella Coola are so jealous that anyone who
682 succeeded in elevating himself to a position above his fellows
[152] became an object of envy. Their mythology contains many
examples of the murder of some powerful chief by rivals of his
own village, and informants of today state that these records
are true. One intelligent man asserted that his father had

[illegible]

thus been slain about seventy years earlier. It appears that attempts were commonly made to kill chiefs by means of sympathetic magic, and it is quite possible that such attempts, becoming known, preyed upon the minds of the victims to such an extent that death resulted.

WEALTH

Since wealth is so important in chieftainship, it would be desirable at this point to consider the concepts of wealth. Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a satisfactory treatment of this subject. The coming of the white man altered the economic aspects of Bella Coola life so radically, and at such an early period, that concrete examples of economic interdependence, so useful in a thorough study, could not be obtained in the field. It is possible that greater attention to this subject might have produced more satisfactory results, but I am doubtful of this.

In the old days, "wealth" was of two categories: (*a*) Prerogatives, tangible or intangible, which could be shown, pictorially or dramatically, or could be expounded in words; and (*b*) Goods which could be distributed for validating such prerogatives. Individual possessions, unsuited for distribution, were hardly considered as wealth; a sewing-machine, a bottle of whiskey, a bed, or some other luxury might give satisfaction to the owner, but did not increase his importance in the eyes of his fellows. The value of objects was only for their use in ceremonial distribution; indeed, prior to such distribution, they were only of potential value. This attitude controlled Bella Coola economics in the early days of contact, and still influences their behaviour. A native store-keeper once ruefully commented on the fact that he would gain no advantage from the goods on his shelves, since he hoped merely to sell them, not to give them away.

A man's relatives were expected to help him in the acquisition of goods, but the extent of their contributions was never

difficult to estimate the former influence of such warriors. The belief of all in their ability must have given them some prestige, although the requirements of practical qualifications in fighting must often have prevented them from functioning as military leaders. In other words, a man may be, socially, a warrior, even though he lacks ability as a fighting man.

The functions of warriors are not limited to fighting with enemies of other tribes. Each has the power to kill and must exercise it when requested. If a mistake is made in a ceremonial *Axaist* dance, the offender must be killed, and one way in which this is accomplished is by the senior members of the society requesting a professional warrior to act as executioner. One of these men, who lived at *Kuke-de-i*, always used a stone club which had been handed down from generation to generation, becoming the property of each new incumbent of the name and prerogative. In other cases, the killing is said to have been done with the aid of magic. The power of the *Kuke-de-i* warrior had been conferred with so much goods that he was the most powerful professional killer known to the Bella Coola. He acted on instructions from the senior members of the *Axaist* society or when called upon by anyone. If, for example, a man found that his wife had been faithless and wished to kill her lover, it was only necessary to tell the professional warrior, who was bound to act in accordance with his prerogative. He received no pay, since he was merely exercising his right. The relatives of the murdered person never took revenge on the slayer, realizing that he was powerless in the matter, though they frequently requested him to slay the person who had asked him to kill the first victim. He could never refuse to do so, even if the victim were his own brother, or if he knew that the person he was to kill was guiltless. The underlying principle was that this man's power had been increased to such a pitch by the distribution of presents that if he failed to exercise it on demand, it would react upon himself and cause his own death. This *Kuke-de-i* warrior began in time to have an aversion for his vocation, since he

[illegible]

581
553
S11
#25

name is not returned, the donors may be offended at its being kept; if it is returned, they may be offended that it has not been kept.

The following examples will help to explain this rather complex point.

About 1900 the sister of a man who was middle-aged in 1952 was married to a Bella Coola to whom she was not related. At the wedding, her father being dead, her brother superseded one of the family's origin myths, and she took her husband's name from it. It was said to have been "headed screen," the word used being the same as that signifying the dragging of a heavy timber, suggesting, of course, the importance and dignity of the designation in question. On two later occasions the woman's family gave valuable presents to the man's, thus doing their part to square the debts, the strength which comes to both families by an interchange of presents marking the dignity of marriage, in fact, its basic principle. Unfortunately, there were no children. If the husband had wished to retain these names for his family, he should have arranged a further marriage between one of his own relatives and one of his wife's, to ensure the value of gifts he had received. He did not do so, and thus lost all legal claim to the designations in question. Since the loss, he was indignant when his wife's brother duly validated one of these names for himself as a potlatch, as if it had been dormant.

The accompanying diagram-pedigree shows another instance of the same kind. *Swanee*'s daughter, *Swakhanis*, was married to *Nintsumsim*, and at the wedding her father promised his name for any offspring. Six children were born, but *Nintsumsim* illegally used the designation, *Swanee*, for King George, his son by another wife. This naturally incensed the relatives of the first *Swanee*, especially as the debt could not be adjusted by the marriage of one of *Nintsumsim*'s daughters to one of their family, since there were no daughters. To make matters worse, King George passed the name to his son, Jack King George, and again there were no daughters to readjust the debt. Finally, Jack King George married *Qwalut*, a relative of the first *Swanee*, without the usual lengthy period of engagement, and while she was still unmarried for the year that follows puberty. No children resulted, by which part of the debt could have been repaid. Thus, not only did Jack King George violate the customary ideas of decency, but in the course of three generations two women were obtained from the *Swanee* family without any compensation. Bitter feelings arose, and a few years ago one of the descendants of the first *Swanee* took the name for himself as a potlatch as if it had been dormant, thus arousing the ire of Jack King George. In 1913 [illegible] [illegible]

Bella Coola II-5 (1952-1954) 1948
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[illegible] two of his female relatives were murdered at Kimsquit. The slayer was never detected, but most of the Bella Coola believe that it was done by one of Snaunaa's relatives, and that the dispute about names was quite sufficient to furnish an excuse for the deed.

It is hoped that these two instances will serve to emphasize why the Bella Coola prefer marriages within the ranks of the ancestral family. When this taboo places, names are usually given outright, and not merely promised for the use of the future children.

Snaunaa = ?

|

Nintsumlaix = *Snalkaxtlx* = another woman

|

King George = ?

|

Jack King George = *Qwaklal*

After this digression, to return to the marriage of X and Y: The ceremony is taking place in the house of Y's father, and the parents of each participant have expounded parts of their origin myths, and promised names for the resultant children.

Then Y's relatives give numerous presents to X's family, in each case including those who are associating themselves with the contract. Canoes, slaves, blankets, and other articles of great worth are given; they are said to be "bed covering" for Y. The greater their value, the greater her prestige. Her father asks a fluent chief to address the assemblage, speaking as though he were Y. He says in effect:

"My father, my mother, my brothers, my uncles, and their associates have given me my bed covering."

These presents are the binding feature of the wedding. They are said to lock the girl in her husband's house, and accordingly are sometimes called, "rope fastenings." This is only done when a woman is married for the first time.

Another orator now holds forth on behalf of Y's father:

"What we do today is no small matter. We have done today what was done in former times, and what shall be done in the future."

above, and this is believed to have occurred on one occasion to the daughter of a chief.

Once, many hundred years ago, the daughter of a Bella Coola chief was married to the son of Tsaiwaman, a Bella Bella chief, living at Rivers Inlet. At the marriage, in Bella Coola, valuable presents were given by both families, and the girl went to live in Bella Bella with her husband. Some ten years later, Tsaiwaman gave a large potlatch to which he had invited guests from all parts of the coast. As is duty bound, his daughter-in-law's relatives gave a certain amount of goods to enhance her. They were not wealthy, so that the contribution was of small value. Tsaiwaman had expected a larger present, and now found himself unable even to repay his debts to those who had assembled. He did not immediately show his resentment, but soon afterwards sold his daughter-in-law as slave to a Kitkatla chief. The Bella Coola were justly indignant, but could not make up their minds what to do in such an unprecedented case. The girl ultimately escaped and made her way home after lengthy wanderings (II, p. 805).

A husband demands faithfulness on the part of his wife, though he himself is often rather lax. Illicit intercourse is regarded, not as a deadly sin, but as an infringement of the husband's prerogatives. But if a woman should bear a child at a time when it was impossible for the husband to have been the father, due to absence, he would probably accept it as his own and do no more than administer a beating, though some jealous men would divorce a wife for this. Bella Coola sentiment on such matters varies with the individual; it is universally considered to be a matter that concerns the husband alone and he can do as he thinks fit. The daughters of chiefs are usually faithful to their husbands, whereas those of poorer persons, unrestrained by the valuables expended at their marriages, are more lax. If the husband should catch an adulterer, he can, if bold, slay him on the spot and the exaction of blood revenge would be uncalled for. Usually a fight ends the matter, though the offender's family may give presents to the aggrieved husband, and his wife's relatives may also make donations to atone for their daughter's failings. A husband does not share his wife with anyone, and a question as to the lending of a wife

ceremony usually consisted simply of the man and woman living together. In theory, this prevented the children from ever obtaining a name or other prerogative embodied in the ancestral myth of the free-born parent, and an effort was always made to conceal from them the details of the ancestral family's origin myth. But, as already described in the section dealing with slaves, the expenditure of valuable presents served as antidote, or at least to cover, the blot. If the child succeeded in giving many potlatches, the stain was generally forgotten. On the other hand, if the child of a slave married to a free man was not "washed," he could always be shamed by a reminder of the disgrace of his parents' wedding.

In case of murder, the son or other near relative of the victim sometimes accepts a daughter or other member of the offender's family instead of exacting blood revenge. The bride is delivered to her husband with valuable goods "to wash away the blood," but these never suffice entirely to remove the disgrace from her or her children. The latter may inherit names and prerogatives from their father, but even if they attain to the position of chiefs, they can always be put to shame by reference to their mother's marriage as an atonement for murder. Of course the influence of a great chief makes it impolitic to refer to his ancestry, and there are a few instances of men having reached such a position of eminence that the blot has been practically forgotten. The wife's family must continue to give presents to the husband for years after marriage, otherwise her lot is unenviable indeed, and her children have the status of the unwashed offspring of a slave and a free-man. In some cases a marriage of this type is entered upon years after a murder, if a son or other descendant wishes to end the anxiety of constantly expecting blood revenge.

REPURCHASE OF THE WIFE

Repurchase of a wife is the necessary consequence of every reputable Bella Coola marriage. It is assumed that the pre-

in a skirmish by the Carrier, one of their women mutilated a body by poking out the eyes. The corpses were rescued and a Bella Coola with secret knowledge dropped into the eye sockets some potent medicine. As the corpses rotted, the murderess began to suffer pains, and the woman who had poked out the eyes lost her sight. As a blind, old woman, she had been seen by several men with whom the matter was discussed.

To Cause the Death of a Murderer (three means)

(1) Two women were murdered at Kimquit in 1915. Before they were buried, an elderly Bella Coola put a secret medicine on the back of the neck of each so that the murderer would die from a disease located there. Within eight months, a Rivers Inlet man succumbed to a deep sore at the back of the neck, and it was assumed that he must have visited Kimquit women and perpetrated the double murder.

Medicines like this and the preceding are widely known, but it is sorcerers who specialize in using them.

(2) When a man dies suddenly and murder is suspected, although the perpetrator is unknown, place the corpse within an old, hollow spruce log. As it rots, needles and dirt enter the flesh and at the same time the body of the murderer becomes lacerated and full of sores. This method was employed during the lifetime of an informant and caused the death of the suspected murderer, whose guilt was thereby accepted as proved.

(3) Bury the victim's body with a reed in its mouth and the murderer will soon die.[1]

To Kill

Lift a corpse from the ground and point it at one or more individuals. This causes their death in the near future.

[1] This information was obtained from one informant only; details were unavailable, and confirmation from others could not be secured.

with such powers that they killed one another in their performances. Consequently, they decided to dance only in the winter months, and merely to imitate the actions which had been previously carried out.

There are other traditions, probably with an historical basis, describing conflicts with the *o'wik*. The Bella Coola say that long, long ago there were not enough *Sisiut* names for more than the old people to be admitted to the society, and that though members were regarded as having supernatural powers, yet the *o'wik*, confident in their numbers and strength, used frequently to assail the supremacy of the *Sisiut*. On one occasion, when the latter had prepared an elaborate feast of smoked goat flesh for themselves, the *o'wik* collected their weapons and demanded a share of the feast. The *Sisiut*, furiously angry, felt compelled to yield, though later they took revenge through the destruction wrought by many Cannibals and Swaxhaws when frenzied. It is said that even recently if the *Sisiut* did not invite the *o'wik* to one of their dances, they were always careful to placate them by sending half of the food as a present.

Sometimes the *o'wik*, collectively, were bold enough to kill a *Sisiut*, particularly if something had gone amiss in a dance house. Or other motives might be strong enough to outweigh respect for a member of the society. On one occasion a chief, who was not a member of the society, was told that his wife, who was, had been in the habit of prowling off at night with a Cannibal. The jealous husband prepared his bear-spear and slew the Cannibal when next he entered his house during a frenzied rampage of the village. *Kokoxtsi*, both from that village and others in the vicinity, combined to cause the murderer's death with the aid of a member of the society who was a professional killer.

Success did not always come to the *Sisiut* in quarrels between members of the two societies. Long ago, the *o'wik* were invited to a *qulaa* in a village in the upper Bella Coola valley. One of their own dances was taking place, but they

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If the war [illegible] ...ter feelings had been ... caused by their relatives, who ... when the heart of battle had ... warned as slaves, the children ... as members of their owner's ... were conquered, though never ... ancestral family. Torture as ... been a rare practice. One ... referred that in her childhood ... out on the hot rocks at the ... his tissues crushed with stones ... similar conditions could be ... this must have been an unusual ... have long ceased, but the Bell... of other long-abandoned customs ... was ever a common occurrence ... which sentences is to be expected ... been abominable if the custom ... been one which played so im... Bella Coola.

Scalps were hung on a ... suspended as valuable trophies ... setting out on a war expedition ... with one, holding it in position ... At a man's death, they were ... more often, buried with his ... the Fort Rupert people ... their masks. When the Bella ... for a murder, instead of scal... brought back his whole head ... the grave of the person avenged.

At this late period it is ... opinion as to the amount of ... Bella Coola. Several of the ... terms of the slaughter accompl...

...g duration in which extremely [727]
...ured, captives were often ...
...ome unreclaimed for the purpose ...
...vided. Failing this, prisoners re-[527]
...especially growing up virtually ...
...ndy as far as food and clothing ...
... sharing in the prowess of his ...
...lling of prisoners seems to have ...
...tremely old Kimsquit woman ...
...he had seen a captive scratched ...
...e of the ocean, fastened there, ...
... and allowed to die. No other ...
...ioned and it seems probable that ...
... case. It is true that hostilities ...
...s Coola have clear recollections ...
...s, and it is unlikely that torture ...
...e. It is, of course, one about ...
...ed, but information would have ...
... had been common or if it had ...
...portant part in the lives of the ...

...d and dried like salmon, then [422]
...s in the taker's house. When [714]
..., he would often cover his head ...
... by weaving its hair into his own. [768]
... either inherited by his heirs or, ...
...er possessions. It is said that ...
...d to tie scalps in bundles to ...
... Coola went to war to retaliate [721]
...ping a victim, they sometimes [448]
... and impaled it on a stake over [682]
...ed.

...irtually impossible to form any 721
...loodshed in wars waged by the ...
... older people spoke in gloating ...
...ished by their ancestors, but all ...

Bella Bella NES

A MURDERER AND HIS PUNISHMENT

B 539* 682

For many generations, the name *Sekakmate* has been pronounced among the Chilkoots. It seems to embody an irresistible tendency to lawlessness and killing, for almost all who have been so designated have been murderers. About 1860 or 1870, a certain *Sekakmate* married a Bella Coola woman, which brought his attention to the commercial value of her relatives. He used to do considerable trading at the Hudson's Bay Company's post, although his manner of obtaining furs was commonly pernicious. He had a wide knowledge of the interior and of the routes by which hunters were likely to bring pelts to Bella Coola. If he could learn that a stranger was likely to be travelling along a trail, it was *Sekakmate's* custom to set out, unarmed, to meet him. He would explain to the hunter that he had come to buy furs and the latter would always make him welcome. The price was argued in a friendly manner and the two would prepare to camp together for the night. Then *Sekakmate* would say:

"Perhaps you do not know what a dangerous place Bella Coola is? Even now I am running away. I do not think I will be pursued, though I wish I had a musket to lay beside me as I sleep."

An unsuspicious hunter would usually offer to lend his to *Sekakmate*, who, protesting his gratitude, would load it and go to sleep with it beside him. Early in the morning he would rise, shoot his sleeping companion, steal his furs and sell them at the trading post. Sometimes he would murder two or even three hunters on a single trip; thus in course of time he had amassed great riches, but had also made enemies over a wide area. Whenever it became too dangerous for him in the interior he would retreat to Bella Coola and live with his wife's relatives. People sometimes asked him why he continued his nefarious work, but he always answered that it was involuntary, his parents having smeared him with ashes from a wasp's nest when an infant.

On one occasion, *Sekakmate* set out for Salmon House, on the Dean River, where there was always an encampment of Carriers. He travelled up the valley of the Nechestcounnay and had just reached the open lands above the timber-line when he met two Carriers, bound for Bella Coola with furs. At once he began scheming to kill them and steal the pelts. *Sekakmate* greeted the two by saying:

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with the details, though the old man from whom the account was obtained discussed it with his wife and with several of his friends who were confident that it was related in the same form as it had been told to them by a Bella Bella many years before. Since it is not the type of theme to be invented as a story, it must be left as an unexplained incident, half-buried in the mists of tradition.

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"I was on my way to visit you, but that will be unnecessary now that I have been fortunate enough to meet you."

The two hunters, ignorant of *Sekalmāx-a*'s supposition, were willing to do business without having to journey to Bella Coola, and suggested that he turn back to a favourite camping-place within the timbered area. He agreed, and they soon reached a spot which he had quitted half an hour previously. *Sekalmāx-a* at once went off to gather firewood, and soon returned with a load; this was not sufficient, but he told one of the Carriers that more was available in the direction he indicated, and that he would remain to help the other build a fire. The remaining Carrier lit some of the wood which had been broken up, but carelessly threw on too much so that the fire was choked. As he knelt to blow it up, *Sekalmāx-a* was given the opportunity for which he had been looking, and slew his companion with a single blow of his axe on the back of the head. Without waiting to conceal the body, the murderer hurried off to meet the other Carrier. He was returning without any fuel and inquired:

"Where did you get the wood? I could not find the place."

Sekalmāx-a guided him to the spot and suggested that they cut long stakes which they could carry between them. This they did, but as the Carrier bent to lift his end of the burden, he too was felled with a blow. *Sekalmāx-a* dragged the corpse under a fallen tree and covered it with bark, then returned to the fire and heaped stones over the body of his first victim. Having thus achieved his purpose, he camped for one night on the spot and then returned to Bella Coola with the stolen furs. It was plain to all that these must have been obtained illegally since sufficient time had not elapsed for him to take a trip to Salmon House. Moreover, he had blackened his face and tied his hair into a top-knot as is done by all warriors after killing people.

Two days after the unfortunate hunters left Salmon House, another party left for Bella Coola by the same route. They reached the usual camping-ground at dusk and looked for traces of their friends, but, to their surprise, found the remains of one bad only. A few minutes later one of the women happened to stumble on the corpse hidden beneath the tree. Torches were prepared and a careful investigation made, leading to the discovery of the other body. Taking into account the fact that the two had been carrying rich loads of furs, the Carriers suspected that it must have been *Sekalmāx-a* who had slain their friends.

Meanwhile *Sekalmāx-a* was at *Qemp-ts* where a Cannibal dance was taking place. During this, he fired upon and seriously wounded a young Bella Coola, *Nuxnilsta*, who was employed at the Hudson's Bay Company's post. The assault was committed in the presence of the factor, who handed his gun to an elderly Bella Coola and told him to shoot the

[illegible] Boas Collection MAS

numbers. The man, a coach also, took careful aim at *Sekakmdz-a*'s cap- 139[1]
tors, but the number had a further conjuncture than he suspected, as the 142
bullet, instead of dropping and killing the man, flew straight and surely
cut down the cult on cap of his head. *Sekakmdz-a* ran off to the village
and *Nacwadze* was carried to the house of one of his relatives on the north
bank of the river.

Conflicting reasons are given for this assault. Some state that *Sekak-*
mdz-a's uncontrollable temper led him to fire; others that he did so on
the orders of *Pudze*, who was offended because *Nacwadze* had disobeyed
an order to carry food home to his wife. It is whispered that on several
occasions *Pudze* had used *Sekakmdz-a* to get rid of those who had dis-
pleased him.

If the assault had been committed during the summer, revenge would
have been an affair of the injured youth's relatives, but it occurred during
the *hamat'sa* season so all members of the society were affected. A party
was organized to arrest the offender with the aid of an American who
happened to be at the Hudson's Bay Company's post at the time.
Sekakmdz-a was in the rear part of one of the houses at *Kyuquot* to whom his
enemies entered and stood bantering at the door. As he faced them, an
old man, related to *Nacwadze*, crept behind and leapt on him, wrapping
his arms and legs around him. The murderer drew a knife and struggled
furiously before he was overcome, bound and carried to *Klaskino* where
his victim lived. *Sekakmdz-a* pleaded that he had mistaken *Nacwadze* for
one of his Chilkotin relatives, but when no attention was paid to this, he
said that he had acted under orders from *Pudze*. This was likewise dis- [122]
regarded, nor was there any suggestion of revenge on the alleged insti-
gator since he, being a chief, could do as he liked. It is said that *Pudze*
endeavoured to help his henchman by sending a message to some Chil-
kotin who were camped in the vicinity and inviting them to rescue their
kinsman.

Meanwhile it was obvious that *Nacwadze* was seriously wounded. His
relatives said that if he lived, they would be willing to accept compen-
sation for the assault, so *Sekakmdz-a* was kept, bound hand and foot, in
a house where a *hamat'sa* dance was taking place. During the night he
almost succeeded in freeing himself from his bonds, but this was discov-
ered and he was again tied up; it is possible that an accomplice assisted
him in the attempt to escape. Towards dawn *Nacwadze* died and it was
decided that his murderer should be killed at once.

The *hamat'sa* all helped to take him outside and make preparations
for shooting him, but no one desired the task of executioner. Meanwhile
the Chilkotin were gathering; a fight seemed imminent and the excite-

[illegible] man was wrong. One of the chiefs told two boys who were standing close to him, but another interposed, saying:

"This is too mighty a matter for mere lads."

He himself covered Ashdenate a and made ready to press the trigger. The murderer, seeing his fellow-tribesmen in the vicinity, cried to avail for time.

"Please do not shoot me," he called out. "I have always been terrified to die that way, please use a knife."

"Some of those you slew were probably terrified of murders too," the self-appointed executioner gravely replied.

"Wait just a moment," Ashdenate a pleaded. "I want to speak to my kinsmen."

"So probably did several of those you shot," came the terse answer.

Then the chief fired and Ashdenate a fell dead. The Chilkotin were armed and seemed on the point of rushing forward to revenge their relative, but the chief took another moment, bewildered as to their intentions, and said:

"All right. The dogs will use you too."

A Chilkotin chief pointed out that the Bella Coola were armed and in overwhelming numbers, so advised his angry followers to withdraw. Thus the incident closed without further bloodshed. Some years later Ashdenate a's corpse was given to his relatives, whom then it was buried by the Ashdenate slave in a large grave, beneath the body of Nyandzin.

A SUCCESSFUL HUNT

One September, between 1840 and 1850, a certain Sinaxoodzaxis was preparing for a potlatch. Taking twenty men with him as packers, he set out for mountain goats up the valley of the Salmon, which flows into the main Bella Coola from the north, nearly opposite Mount Nusqulz. They camped at a suitable spot, and for several days Sinaxoodzaxis hunted with fair success. On one occasion, when out with his son, he happened to notice a number of female goats on a narrow point of rock, beneath which there was a sheer drop to a jagged pile of boulders. Quickly realizing that there was only one approach to the point where the animals were standing, Sinaxoodzaxis told his son to remain below while he climbed up to stalk his quarry. With extreme caution, he succeeded in getting between the goats and the only line of escape; then he knew they were his, and stood up boldly. He shot two or three, and stampeded the rest into plunging over the precipice where they were crushed to death on the rocks far beneath. The successful hunter climbed down to where his son had remained and the two carried one of the carcasses out to the trail where

ON THE SUPERNATURAL POWERS OF MAGICIANS. [827]

By laying their hands on the nape of a person they are able to tell whether his soul is present or whether it has left the body. If the soul should become weak they are able to restore it to its former vigour. If a person suspects it to be lost that his soul has flown away, without looking he shall. The shaman have no bearing wings, which give a speed like those of a mosquito. He may catch and restore it to the nape of its owner. If the soul leaves the body without looking he shall the person becomes crazy.

The art of shamanism is bestowed by Sun. It is impossible to obtain it by means of fasting and praying as is the case among the neighbouring tribes, but it is a free gift from the deity. A person who is to become a shaman will fall sick, and, during his illness, Sun will give him a song which must be kept a deep secret. After this he is able to cure diseases. If a person falsely pretends to have received the gift of shamanism, and tries to work out diseases from a patient, he will fall sick himself.

When asked more closely about the various different between this method of obtaining the power and that of the neighbouring tribes my informant said: "When an Ostyak is very anxious to become a shaman he repairs to the mountains where the deity of their shamans resides (probably Mir-kem) who will initiate him. No Ostyak can obtain the art in such a way."

Sickness is caused by a disease entering the body or by witchcraft (see p. 417). The shaman is able to extract the disease by sucking. A peculiar method of witchcraft, somewhat similar to the "shi'a" of the Kwakiutl (see Sixth Report of the Committee, p. 112), was described to me as follows: The person who wants to bewitch his enemy endeavours to obtain some of his old clothing, portions soaked by perspiration being considered especially effective. After it is obtained a wolf is killed, and the clothing is put into its mouth, which is then tied up. Then the wolf is placed in a box. This procedure is called *sont*. Sometimes the clothing or some hair is inclosed in the bone of a wolf or of a dead person. No shaman can counteract these charms.

If a person has been murdered, and a string is tied firmly around the neck of the corpse, the murderer's neck will become diseased and he will be unable to breathe and will die. If used to scratch in the corpse's eye and the bits stored over it the murderer will die. If a person has been killed with a knife or spear, or another weapon, to which some of his blood adheres, the latter is brought into contact with a wolf's head, dog's hair, or anything else that is hot, and then thrown into the fire or put into a frog's or snake's mouth; then the murderer will die.

I add here a few current beliefs:—

Humming indicates that people are talking about one.

Slight ringing of the ears indicates rain, loud ringing good weather.

Twitching of the muscles of the left side of the body is unlucky; of the right side lucky. Twitching of the skin under the eyes indicates that one will cry.

If a dog dreams and howls in its sleep its owner will die.

The breaking of a box without an apparent cause is unlucky.

Wars.

When a war party was organized the warriors did not paint their faces, but they put on headbands of white cedar-bark and strewed their